Take care

bunny_teeth

Take care by bunny_teeth

Category: IT (2019), IT (Movies - Muschietti), IT - Stephen King
Genre: Abuse, Addiction, Alcoholism, Angst, Bottom!Richie, Canon Divergence, Crush, Eddie Kaspbrak - Freeform, Fluff, Funky Gays In Love, Grinding, Hurt/Comfort, Internalized Homophobia, Love, M/M, Munchausen by proxy, Pining, Reddie, Richie Tozier - Freeform, Slow Burn, Smut, hurt fic, it chapter 2 - Freeform, mlm, past trauma, pennywise - Freeform, switch!richie
Language: English
Characters: Ben Hanscom, Beverly Marsh, Bill Denbrough, Eddie Kaspbrak, Mike Hanlon, Richie Tozier, Stanley Uris
Status: In-Progress
Published: 2019-10-21
Updated: 2019-11-26
Packaged: 2019-12-19 15:51:20
Rating: Not Rated
Warnings: Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Chapters: 3
Words: 7,056
Publisher: archiveofourown.org
Summary:

“Take care eds,” Richie managed to choke.

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He climbed into his car and turned on the radio. After a beep of his horn as farewell Richie let the tears come again. He knew Eddie probably wouldn’t write or call, why would he? In the end Richie was Richie and that couldn’t mean much to anyone.

1. Chapter 1

Authors note: this begins with Richie in the deadlights and what he sees before snapping back, just to clear up any confusion.

Richie Tozier had known he was going to die fairly soon, but he'd always imagined it as a quiet affair, done by himself. What he had not imagined was his last words being "you're a sloppy Bitch" before he was murdered by an interdimensional clown that he only remembered existing two days ago.

Richie supposed this wasn't a disappointing way to go, and he also almost felt a sense of closure. At least his last words had finally catered to the gay agenda he'd avoided all his life. Then again, this death was taking rather a long time, and really was not containing the sights that Richie expected.

He wanted to scream, kick, do anything, but he felt limp and weak, with a bright light piercing through his brain. He wondered who's voice he could hear in the background. He wondered who's screams kept repeating over and over in this nightmare of white light. This wasn't what death was supposed to be like. Yes he was seeing his friends, his parents, but they were all in pain. Then,

Eddie. Maybe this was death after all. Maybe Richie had somehow made it to heaven because if he had this was the exact image he would see.

God eddie. Richie would never care about someone as much as him, his heart would never ache for someone more; and every pharmacy and every bandaid held a memory of a past reproach, a gentle shove of his shoulder, the sound of an inhaler being used. Richie had never tried to move on. 27 years and a life of being someone else on stage and he was still a coward. Still the boy who was scared of being caught by the kissing bridge. Scared of being caught gazing at someone for too long.

Richie felt every emotion, every painful feeling of longing push against his chest. He saw eddie again, but as an adult, how he was now, standing in front of him grinning.

"I think i killed it! I did! I think I killed it for re-" Richie felt blood spatter, warm and wet, tasting like pennies in his mouth. He watched the face of the man he loved change suddenly, his eyes widening in fear and shock. No.
Nonononono.

Eddie was not dead this was not real, this couldn't be real.

The light faded, he felt a great rushing feeling, like all the pain was spilling out-

Richie crashed to the floor.

There was eddie in front of him "i think i killed it! i did! i think-"
"EDDIE"
Richie launched at the brown haired man just saving him in time. the large pincer protruding from It grazed heavily across his back but Richie couldn't see through the blur of movement. The pincer slammed into the ground centimetres away. Eddie screamed as they pulled away and Richie's blood went cold at the sound, had he been fast enough? Frantically Richie patted Eddie down, crying. Eddies chest was whole, warm, nothing was broken. He couldn't help but feel like he was being lied to, that what he had seen in the deadlights was still yet to come. Richie felt Eddie's hands come up to grasp his face.

"Richie, Rich, I'm okay, please don't cry. I'm okay."
Had there been time, Richie would have held eddie and sobbed with relief before checking him all over again. But they had to scramble away, kicking up dust.

~*~

It was only after Pennywise was dead, and the losers were scrambling out of Neibolt, did Richie notice the spreading of blood seeping through eddies god awful polo. Once they were out he forced Eddie to turn and lifted up the shirt, he heard Beverly scream at the sight of a large gash across eddies shoulderblades, but the sound of the others was muffled as a ringing in his ears grew louder. He'd failed, yes Eddie was alive but this wound was Richie's fault. Why couldn't he have been faster? He could feel blood under his fingers, warm and

spilling over his hand, though it wasn't enough to be deadly. Eddie seemed to have been able to move normally, and after everything Richie had to admit this wasn’t as bad as I could have been. Eddie was alive.

“Richie, it’s okay, it’s not that bad.” Eddie’s voice drew him out of his own head, it was odd to hear Eddie sound so calm but maybe he was in shock.
“Let’s go,” Eddie winced as he began to walk. None of them were sure where they were going to, Eddie surely needed help. But Bill took the lead and, when Eddie didn’t complain, led them in a familiar route.

~*~

There was an eerie sort of silence as the losers stood at the edge of the cliff. Richie tapped his fingers rapidly against his thigh. The drop looked just as large as it did when they were children, Richie didn't feel like he had grown, everything else remained as huge and terrifying as it had always been. Perhaps it was because he had never let himself feel bigger, or feel like he should be less scared. The sun glinted off the water but a breeze was still present. He could feel Stan’s absence among them as if the wind was avoiding the space where he should be. What Richie would do if Eddie wasn't there to... He didn't want to think. He could have never told Eddie that he loved him, it felt now, after seeing what could have been, that he had to tell the truth. he wondered if he would still be too cowardly, if he would be too late again.

He wanted to ask Eddie if he was sure they shouldn’t go to a hospital first, but Eddie looked determined, brow furrowed in stoic concentration. Richie wondered if he was going to cry.

The splash brought him back to his senses, the shock of Bev’s bright hair below startling him into action. As soon as he surfaced from the water, Richie’s head turned to spot where Eddie had landed, he was still there, he was still safe. Richie could feel the dirt seeping off him, they all stank of sweat and blood and the water was cooling. they swam further out, wincing as the water pushed against their various cuts and bruises, remaining in sombre silence.

“Do you know how many diseases we could be contracting," Eddie whined, the jump had obviously shocked him back to his senses, back to the old hypochondriac he was. Eddie winced as the water flowed over his wound and he continued to grumble quietly. It had always been endearing to Richie- despite his false annoyance- Eddie’s reproaches were even more comforting than before.
"like seriously, we have our genitals and mouths close to this dirt, herpes can be easily contracted! I’m fucking wounded, do you know what type of blood poisoning i could be getting-!” God if that wound got infected Richie would never hear the end of it. Yet most of this felt oddly normal, Eddie was letting his fears spill out rapid fire, just like when they were kids. And Richie was pining. The usual.

“oh you’ll be fine spaghetti." Richie shot back without malice, stopping the rush of words by splashing water towards Eddie who made a huge show of coughing and sputtering. Richie blinked water out of his eyes and the shimmer of blue became red, eddies shocked face flashed in front of his eyes before the vision slipped away. Richie tried not to shake.

Overall there was silence, but the occasional mutter from Eddie meant more than anything to Richie, he couldn't even explain it to everyone, he didn't want to. This is what bev had meant when she spoke about nightmares and the deadlights. Richie couldn't imagine having to dream something like that every night, over and over.

A rock a few meters away, in a shallow area, caught everyone's eye and they made a beeline for it. As soon as they sat down, and the ripples they created had stopped, Richie could see blood drifting away from Eddie in small wisps underwater, and he couldn’t stop the tears.

He knew it must be strange to see him cry. Brave Richie, funny Richie, Richie Tozier who always picks dare, sobbing his heart out. Eddie wasn’t even dead. Ben caught his eye and there was something in his look that meant Richie felt less ashamed about crying anymore. The feeling of everyone holding him was odd, an experience he hardly had, and barely remembered. He was conscious of Eddie’s cheek resting gently on his knee. He wanted all of them to be closer. They all smelt of dirt and sweat and dust and were absolutely perfect in Richie’s point of view. He saw the way that Ben and Bev looked at

each other, maybe, he thought, if he was a poet instead of a comedian he could say what he needed to with Eddie. Richie tried to let it go and focus on calming himself down, he was being held and it was over. Eddie was safe and that's what mattered most.

But he still wished he could get the words past his lips. He wished he had the courage to grab Eddie's face and kiss him, kiss his stupid fucking pretty face until he needed his inhaler again. But he couldn't.

~*~

The hospital was bright, sterile, with rough scratchy sheets that made Richie's palms hurt as he rested them on Eddie's knee over the covers. The closeness of even those touches made him fearful, but Richie had to be there, he had to make sure Eddie was alright. Who else was going to bring him water and remind him that, 'yes, your meds have been taken.' Who else was going to wipe the sweat off Eddie's forehead and memorise which hospital meal he had enjoyed the most so as to get it for him again? The others had stayed in the hotel, probably a smarter choice, but Richie had been cramped in a chair every night, waiting for the moments when Eddie surfaced through the medication to crack a joke or a smile. Richie found it hard to sit still and so had memorised the room to its last detail, recently he had been studying the lint on the carpet. The room wasn't all bad though, with its little window with the off cream coloured curtains and the plastic plant that Eddie still insisted had to be moved away from him, of course he'd complain about a fucking fake plant, Richie thought. The wound on Eddie's back had got infected, and honestly Richie had not realised how much it would stink, it had been green and crusty around the edges, and the stab wound on his cheek had also begun to heal badly, so there was only so much stitches could do. Richie would never tell him, but he thought the scar suited Eddie in a rugged sort of way, even though it was still red and raised and would take a while to fade to white. Richie had wanted to place a finger along it when Eddie slept. Eddie was often asleep, sometimes drooling on himself as he had to be sat up due to his back. Richie would still sit there no matter what, reading, on his phone or awkwardly bouncing around the room, but still there, he had to be, it felt like the avoidance of Eddie's death made every other possibility for tragedy more prominent, more possible.

Richie had been at Eddie's bedside for a week or so before the hospital said he could be discharged, the worst of the infection had been cut off almost immediately, so the healing process with the stitches had begun well, and the antibiotics were doing their job. It was at this point Richie realised he would be going home, and Eddie would be going back to his wife, to someone else who would take care of him. He had been sitting alone again, after the others had left from a visit, and had just been gazing at Eddie, tapping his foot, trying not to think about who was going to be tucking him in to bed in the future, trying to get a damn grip, when Eddie's brown eyes opened.

"What are you staring at Tozier?" The sudden speech made Richie jump, and his eyes focused back in to see Eddie shuffling uncomfortably in his duvet. Unthinking, Richie immediately got up and began helping Eddie rearrange, he was given a confused look which made him pause, but when Eddie didn't complain Richie continued to nervously help.

"Just thinking about how you manage to drool that much in your sleep Kaspbrak," Richie shot back, smiling at the way Eddie instantly wiped violently at his mouth.
"They said you can go tomorrow," Richie said, quieter now,"are you okay to drive?" He wanted Eddie to say 'no,' for him to ask Richie to drive him home and they could listen to Eddie's music and Richie would insult it but secretly enjoy it and, and...

"I'm okay, thank you."

It hurt but Richie smiled,"sure you won't wreck the car?

"Oh fuck off," Eddie laughed back, it was soft and tentative due to the still tender wound. The gentleness of it made Richie feel an even stronger sense of longing, the type that caused him to need to rush to the kissing bridge at age 13 and carve the truth into it.

Richie sat back down and pulled a strand of fabric from the chair he was it, it was squishy but not enough to be comfortable and was an ugly school blue colour that clashed with the whites and creams of the rest of the room. He squeezed hand sanitizer onto his palm, a recently developed habit due to Eddie and his wounds. It smelt

alcoholic and almost sweet, but in a burning sort of way. Richie watched the globular drop of it slowly drift and dissolve against his palm.

“Richie?” The voice snapped him out of it.

“Hm?”

“I said will the others come by to say goodbye?” Eddie asked. He almost looked like a child, so small and frail, and certainly skinner since recent events. Richie wondered if he looked as peaky, this weeks sleeping and eating arrangements surely had some effect.

“Yeah of course Eds,” Richie stretched and yawned.

“Don’t call me Eds,” came the retort, but Richie knew Eddie was smiling, and he heard the soft laugh again.

“Aw you know you love it.”

~*~

The day they all said goodbye, Richie continually had to blink tears out of his eyes. When Mike had mentioned that their scars, and everything, would not last forever, Richie had taken a moment of time to scratch in the faded R+E into the wood of the kissing bridge and was able to forgive himself just a little for being so afraid. Nothing lasts forever but he wanted to make that love last as long as he could. Richie thought about the faded letters, and how much they meant to him, how right it felt to scrape them in again and feel the indents they made in the slightly damp wood.

When Richie returned, Eddie was in fresh clothes again and looking tired but ready to go. Everyone looked so ready to go but him, even though all his items were packed, Richie felt as though there was something he couldn’t leave without. He knew what it was, of course but that would never happen, he could never tell the truth. It stung a little that they discharged Eddie whilst Richie was out but maybe it was for the best, he wasn’t sure if he wouldn’t have been able to say goodbye to that room in person. It meant saying goodbye to catering to Eddie, to propping up his pillows and pushing back his hair. It

meant saying goodbye to those stupid hypoallergenic wipes and particular lunch orders. Saying goodbye to everything Richie pretended to hate. Beverly and Ben were holding hands and that caused an even stronger pang of pain, they were getting everything richie wanted. But he said nothing, only walked up to Eddie to say goodbye.

“Take care Eds," Richie managed to choke,"tell your wife I’d love to meet her, and I’ll tell your mum you miss her." He threw in a joke to distract Eddie from him blinking the tears out of his eyes.

“Oh fuck off," Eddie’s light hearted reply made Richie’s heart lift.

“I-" he stops. Not now, he can't, not while everyone is here."I- just take care, keep in touch." Richie reached for a hug, and a rush of warmth and love filled him when it was returned. "Goodbye," he whispered, the tears clogging his throat.

He got into his car and turned on the radio. After a beep of his horn as farewell Richie let the tears come again. He knew eddie probably wouldn’t write or call, why would he? In the end, Richie was Richie and that couldn’t mean much to anyone. As he drove, Richie contemplated their farewell, repeating it over and over like a teenager with a crush. Well, that was how Eddie made him feel. He thought about what he had said. “Take care”? They never used to say things like that to each other. What came after in that goodbye had felt normal, felt like childhood. But all the emotional, cautious words felt different. Different to how he and Eddie used to be emotional, different to how they used to show that they cared. “Take care” was something more careful, an adult type of concern. Not the fierce hugs. Not the pinches to the cheek, which were accompanied by a more heartfelt way of telling someone you wanted them to be careful. Wanted them to come back the next day. Richie wasn’t sure what it was they used to say, what words used to replace “take care” but he remembered how they used to touch. He wondered what the Richie Tozier of the summer of 89 would think. What would he think of the fact that he was now scared to touch Eddie Kaspbrak?

~*~

There was a letter on his doorstep when he got home, it was not in

any handwriting he recognised but the writing on letter inside was distinct. Stan. Richie read the letter with tears in his eyes.

Oh Stan.

Better and braver than anyone he knew, though Stan never said anything, he knew Richie's secret and still loved him. By the time Richie got to the end of the letter he could barely read the: "P.S man up Tozier and tell Eddie you love him, life is too short." Stan was always so gentle, knew exactly what to say. Perhaps if he had been more honest with himself he would realize he could have helped them defeat It. Richie knew Stan could have done it, just like Eddie did, he knew that Stan would have understood everything he felt, would have noticed every touch and look that he and Eddie shared. But he had lost Stan and the ache that appeared in his chest when they first found out he had gone was ever present. And while he knew Eddie was still alive and safe, Richie couldn't help but feel like he'd still lost him too.

He sat on his sofa, in his empty flat, staring at the beige carpet. He'd lost two people. Eddie was just lost in another way, but then again he always had been. And Richie knew that even though he had this second chance to confess, he would always be too late. He would always be too scared. Richie Tozier the coward. Richie Tozier the queer.

2. Chapter 2

Authors note: please if u were one of the first to read chap 1, you might want to re-read because i did make some edits okay cool :3

A month or so had passed in which Richie had received a letter and various phone calls from Eddie. Personally, he had sent a get well soon card, which he thought was incredibly funny, and a couple of texts that he regretted. Richie had spoken to Bev the most out of all the losers, they always had a myriad of jokes to pass between them. But recently he could feel her sympathy through the phone and Richie couldn't bear too much of it, he had never been one to let others sort things out for him.

Though Richie hadn't been speaking much to anyone, friends or otherwise, except at various parties with other b-list celebrities who rarely really spoke to him other than to offer some sort of drug, usually cocaine. Classy.

Richie, so far, had never declined, though he usually stuck with alcohol. He often wondered if he had a problem but he was sure he wasn't addicted, well, definitely not to coke, the parties he went to were seldom enough to keep him reasonably safe. Alcohol however, well he hadn't been drunk in the middle of public in the day time yet, nor had he been papped whilst hammered at night, so he supposed he wasn't drinking enough for it to become a problem outside of his house.

Richie opened his cupboard, considering taking a bottle out, but drinking alone felt lame, maybe he should take up smoking again? Well, he hadn't really quit but maybe he should swap alcohol with it, lung cancer felt more appealing than alcohol poisoning at that moment, he knew which one one would come sooner if he kept that shit up. He stood there, hand on the open cupboards handle, wondering how disappointed various people would be with him. He often wondered what it would take to drive everyone away, he thought about the missing poster with his name on it, and the memorial service flyer for his funeral. Thought about how he had never been as scared of clowns as he was about that. He mused over what people would do if he actually died or went missing, he almost

hoped that people would forget about him. Forget about young Richie Tozier, never to be seen again, except in tattered missing posters. It was believable to him too, all it would take is one final ‘beep beep’ and everyone would have an excuse to never see him again.

Richie closed the cupboard.

It took more effort than he would have liked to admit, god, he really was a middle aged, gay, almost-alcoholic, he was living the life huh. Richie sighed and looked at his phone.

He read through texts he had sent to various people, there wasn’t much else to look at there. He tried to avoid looking at the texts that he and Eddie had shared but it was impossible. Richie felt like a teenager again, over analyzing everything he sent and received. Then again, he tried to tell himself, it didn't really matter. What he really should be worried about was not alcohol or Eddie. It was his career, and the fact his last comedy show was a complete mess and how on earth was he going to perform again without losing it? he didn't even like the jokes he told.

"I don't write my own material"

Maybe he could actually start coming up with his own jokes. Whatever, Richie knew it was better to focus on the normal things in life. Continue being a coward and try to forget all about clowns and sewers and how badly his heart ached. Against his will, he wondered if Eddie watched his shows.

"I fucking knew it!"

Richie wondered how far it would be to just drive to see Eddie, to just go and be friendly. To smile at his wife and to give them tickets to his show. But he couldn’t. And Richie wasn’t so sure Eddie’s wife would appreciate him being there, especially since most his digs at Eddie revolved around her. Instead of thinking further about the chaotic encounter that would be him and Myra, Richie cleared up the things he left strewn around his flat. It was better to just be busy, and ever since he had been back he had been letting mess gather, then cleaning, then letting it gather over and over. It was time to tidy

again. Perhaps redecorating or some other middle aged activity would help him forget. Though he never would truly forget, even when they all first left Derry Richie had never let go of a music tape (with a label reading Eddie spaghetti), nor had he filled the hole in his heart that ached for friends and a love he couldn't even remember. Richie shook his head, at least he wouldn't forget again, at least he knew why he was hurting now. Plus, he supposed, he only had to ache for Eddie alone, seeing as the other losers were back in his life.

Richie finished cleaning up his mess, most of the clothes on the floor just went into the wash. He knew it would gather again soon, but at least it felt respectable. Yet it was so empty. Had his flat always felt this lonely? Richie wondered if he would ever be able to love someone enough to share his space with them, he knew it was supposed to be nice, he also knew his flat would feel better if there was someone else there. Someone reprimanding him for forgetting to wash his hands before dinner, someone responding to all his jokes, someone. Someone like Eddie. Maybe that was the only person he would ever love. It wasn't like any encounters with men Richie had in the past had included any emotion other than shame. Maybe there was no point trying.

Richie caved and took out a bottle he thought had the strongest alcohol percentage, if he remembered correctly, and poured himself a glass. That didn't take long. It burned, all warm and tight in his chest. He set his glass down on the wooden countertop, sighing and looking around aimlessly.

His flat was nice, with large windows in his lounge and a natural colour scheme that he actually liked. Richie was glad he had something to call home, something that was still his. It was really anything he could physically hold onto but he was there, and it felt homely enough.

Richie picked up the glass again and took another swig, he wondered if Eddie would ever see his apartment. Perhaps he should call him? Beverly and Ben called him all the time, it wasn't weird, plus he and Eddie were supposed to be the closest, it hurt that it felt different now. But, maybe if Richie made more of an effort he could bring something back, the feeling he used to have as a kid, when Eddie's

full attention was on him. Richie had the phone in his hand and the number memorised, he should do it. He opened the contact, which he had named ‘Eds’ just to be sentimental. His thumb hovered above the call button. Just do it. Just fucking call him coward. Go on.

Richie pressed call.

There was a long silence, punctured by the slow beep. and then,
"Richie? Hi," Eddie sounded almost confused, but happy. Richie felt stuck.

"Uh, hi, um how are you?" He managed to stammer out, fingertips tapping against his glass nervously.

"I’m alright, you?"

"Yeah, yeah fine," god, he felt like an idiot, why was he letting the convo die off like this? What did he even want?

"Sorry Richie is there a reason you called?" Eddie’s voice had no business being so soft, so kind.

"I- not really," Richie admitted,”How is your back though?” He asked quickly, he wished he was still the one to be taking care of Eddie, tucking him in bed and wiping his forehead with specific hypoallergenic wipes (where Eddie got them he had no idea).

"It’s okay thank you, hurts a little if I stretch,” Eddie admitted, he sounded a little sad about it and Richie had never wanted to hold him more, he realised he’d been cradling the phone to his ear like it was his life-line, or a hand against his cheek. Get a fucking grip Tozier, you 13 year old virgin, Richie tried to tell himself off, but his grip on the phone didn’t alter.

“That’s good, I hope it stops bothering you,” a pause, a nice one though. But, what now? Make a joke?
“How’s your mum?” Richie said, fucking ruining it.

“Beep beep Richie, she’s dead you sicko,” it sounded like a laugh but Richie couldn’t help but feel his jokes were getting old, that he should leave everyone alone. This was why he didn’t write his own material. He took a final swig from his glass, finishing it, he felt the

warmth of the drink behind his eyes now. Eddie's voice snapped him out of it again.
"Hey man i have to go soon, Myra is waiting and I-" there was a sigh,"she gets annoyed easily." Eddie sounded tired, yet still blurted out his words a mile a minute, Richie loved it. Richie supposed Eddie's exhaustion was normal but he couldn't help but feel that there was something more. He'd always hated the way Eddie's mother had treated him, always causing him stress and making him feel unsafe. Richie doubted that his wife was any different.

"Yeah don't worry man, have a good one," Richie avoided potential jokes this time, eddie sounded too gentle, and a little upset. God, Richie couldn't stop feeling soft for him, it wasn't fair.

"Take care Richie," so so gentle.

"Bye Eds."

Richie could hear Eddie's smile behind his words,"don't call me eds." His heart broke a little and there was a beeping in his ear. The moment was gone and Richie was left with the burning feeling in his chest and eyes.

Richie pressed the heels of his hands against his eyes. He was acting like a baby. He decided he needed to just calm down and have another drink. It was getting later too, so it was time for pot noodle and a shower as well as the second drink. Perhaps he'd even throw in a shame filled wank but it really depended on his exhaustion levels.

Richie wasn't even past tipsy after his second drink and the hot shower pretty much destroyed all the effects of the third, but Richie was a 6ft depressed comedian so he could drink most people under the table. It was only when he got into bed and the lights were out did Richie feel the warmth behind his eyes a little more, and felt his chest tighten. He was fine though, right? It was the alcohol, maybe he just needed more to get through this rough patch.

Richie knew it wasn't the alcohol making him feel sick and upset. He'd once out drunk two guys in a competition and no one had noticed him vomit after, they were too worried about his poor contestants. Still, he decided that's what it was, as he focused on

expanding his chest as far as he could with each breath in. He was going to be fine.

~*~

Richie had been tossing and turning for hours, kicking the sheets on and off, his back damp with sweat that went from hot to cold. He was exhausted but every time his eyes had shut that night he saw it over and over again.

"I think i killed it! I did! I think I killed it for re-"

Richie could almost taste the blood, and he woke up coughing and spluttering, desperate to get it out of his mouth. He'd drift away again and would see the gaping hole, hear the soft squish, there was barely any noise of the bones cracking, it was so easy for Eddie to be taken from him. So easy for Pennywise to just pass through Eddie's body like it was nothing. He saw Eddie being wrenched away from him and thrown through the air, screaming. Then he would sit upright, tears sticky on his cheeks.

Again and again and again.

It was a miracle he was able to reach for the phone. But he wasn't going to call anyone this time, despite the fact that Eddie was still at the front of his mind.

Richie fumbled for his glasses and turned the phone on. The light of the screen made him squint as he quickly tapped onto his calendar. It had been an obsessive activity. Every night when he woke up, Richie would check when the tour dates were, even though he had it memorised. He would check and remind himself of where he was. It was the most organised he had ever been with dates, the losers wouldn't believe it.

The tour dates he had were in were in the new year, so he still had about three months until it began, as the whole clown fiasco had happened in late September.

Richie had already cleared up the issue with his last failed performance, which ended up with him walking off stage three

minutes in, it had felt like everyone in that theatre was staring through his skin. At least the audience had all got their refunds and Richie had got out of doing a makeup performance. Of course he got out of it, he was a coward and had spent the night of his supposed to be performance, drinking and finishing off with his hand shoved down some strangers pants in a grimy toilet, trying to forget the real reason he threw up. Trying to push out the name that was on loop in his head. Eddie Eddie Eddie Eddie.

Richie flopped back onto the bed, his glasses smushing against his cheek. He felt useless. He felt disgusting, but that was the usual.

He decided that sleeping was useless and spent the rest of the night reading. A feat that no one would suspect of Richie Tozier, especially with his attention span of three seconds. However, it was surprisingly comforting for him, and the alcohol had worn off enough for reading to not be a struggle.

He liked fantasy and sci-fi. The types of genres that could not possibly exist on this plane of reality, ones that were a comforting sort of fiction. He hated horror, that felt too possible now. Richie buried himself into The Hobbit, a peaceful book.

Richie concluded, as Bilbo reached the eagles eyrie, that he could sleep in the day time instead. Things felt less scary then. He hoped things would feel less scary then anyway.

By the time the sun rose Richie had been flat out for a couple of hours, book tipping out of his hands. He was mumbling and wriggling in his sleep, but it was better than nothing.

3. Chapter 3

Summary for the Chapter:

> Eddie's POV
>
> Eddie's chapters will be shorter and infrequent
>
> Please comment any ways I can write these characters more accurately!! Any constructive advice is welcome :3

When Eddie had returned to Derry and was waiting in the Jade of Orient for friends he'd been subconsciously missing all his life, he had been expecting a different version of Richie Tozier to appear. Older, but still with the Hawaiian shirt, gangly arms, and all. What he had not been expecting was a broad shouldered, stubbled, reasonably well dressed Richie Tozier. A memory of Beverly's voice had entered his head at the sight of him. "You grow into your looks."

This was not the Richie Tozier that Eddie had left behind, that Richie was 17 and a different, younger type of attractive. That Richie Tozier was only just reaching the end of every stage of puberty a man can go through, whilst still as beansprout-like as ever. No this was not the Richie Tozier that Eddie had left behind.

That was until he opened his trashmouth.

There was something so comforting about it that Eddie had never been able to place, the normality of arguing with Richie. It felt as though a dark little space in his heart was being filled. As though things were becoming clearer. But along with that came the memory of so many words, spat his way when he was young, words his mother had said to him, especially about Richie. And Eddie remembered to take a step back. To look away. To stop touching Richie Tozier.

~*~

Now he was home and not forgetting anymore, Eddie was beginning

to realise that near death experiences made coming back to his old life extremely underwhelming. He thought that it would give him a new appreciation of domesticity, and his wife, but instead Eddie felt that he should be living more. Living an entirely different life. One where he hadn't had to say goodbye to his friends just yet, one where he could joke with this new Richie Tozier for a moment longer.

~*~

Eddie wondered why Richie had called. He sounded sad, but Richie Tozier doesn't get sad, the thought of that hurt Eddie. Richie Tozier got angry, or thoughtful at best, but sad? No Eddie had only seen Richie cry twice, the first time was over 27 years ago and the second time had been in the quarry just a month past.

Yet there had been something so tired about the way he had spoken to Eddie. it could have been considered normal, they had just defeated some extraterrestrial clown, but there was something nagging at Eddie, as though Richie still had something left to defeat. He decided to sleep on it, perhaps call him in the morning? Maybe that would cheer him up, Richie always loved having someone to throw jokes at. Eddie had always secretly enjoyed having them thrown at him.

"Eddie darling come to bed!" the shrill voice of Myra called. Eddie didn't mean to roll his eyes, this was his wife for gods sake, but he couldn't help it. Since coming home she had been dressing and re-dressing his wound, which, while he didn't complain, made him worry that the excessive attention on it meant that it was becoming more prone to infection, not less.

He wondered if he was on too many meds as well. And whilst Eddie had always believed that medicine was the answer, perhaps a little too much, he was exhausted. It felt like he had spent a month being so brave, brave enough to make his friends proud, only to shrink back into himself as soon as he left. He had a new inhaler again, but had never found it an effort to exercise without it, or do anything without it really. It was only when he woke up from a nightmare, coughing and wheezing, did the sudden burst of medicinal air help him.

Eddie had decided long ago that the need medicine was a far better explanation for his problems than an emotional one.

Eddie rubbed the back of his neck and stared at the photo tacked to the fridge. He looked at Myra's smiling face next to his and forced down a grimace. Eddie wondered if he had ever been attracted to her, not in a sexual way, just in the way a man was supposed to be attracted to his wife. He wondered if sex was the thing they were missing, it was likely considering how much he avoided it.

"Eddie?" He snapped out of it and wandered to bed, where his wife took up more than half of the space.
"Have you taken your vitamins? your other meds?" She inquired, looking at him expectantly,"you know you shouldn't be taking calls so late, it's incredibly detrimental to your health."

"Yes yes, I know, Richie called that's all," Eddie saw Myra perk up at the mention of Richie, she hated his shows, and had always been so fed up of Eddie swearing he knew Richie as kids. The recent reunion that had proved him right only irritated her more. How could Eddie be friends with someone so vulgar.

Eddie hated Richie's shows too but maybe that's because he was able to tell when Richie's jokes were his own and when they were not. Though he would never admit that Richie's own jokes was funnier than his fabricated content.

Eddie didn't elaborate on the call, just switched off the lamp and turned away from the large fleshy mass that was his wife.

Maybe they should get a divorce? the idea didn't shock him, it felt normal. It had been one that crossed his mind frequently. Plus Myra had nearly told him not to come back when he insisted on going to Derry anyway. She'd almost hit him when he returned, he wasn't sure why she didn't. Perhaps his wound stopped her, the one on his cheek and then the one on his back. Perhaps it gave her a new canvas of risks and medical issues to lecture about. Perhaps she liked taking care of poor, frail, little Eddie just as much as he subconsciously liked being fussed.

As much as he hated feeling weak and as much as he loathed the

new, fresh memories of his mother doing the same, there was something so natural about letting his wife clean his back. Letting her watch him with beady eyes as he put a pill in his mouth to replace emotional vulnerability. Something so easy about slipping into the routine of ‘yes mommy’ and ‘I love you mo-Myra.”

He had been thankful that none of the losers had called her whilst he was in hospital, it meant he got to tell Myra his version of his injury when he got home. Plus, it would have been embarrassing to have the losers watch this new version of his mother fuss over him and shout at the hospital staff.

Myra let out a long sigh beside him, she was asleep. Eddie wondered what it would be like to have someone else next to him, someone he was attracted to. Someone who wouldn’t smother him. He wondered what Richie was doing, of all things to be wondering. Maybe it was better to have no one beside him at all.

Eddie let the thought go, though it was harder than usual, and slowly drifted off to sleep, the rattling breath of his wife disturbing the silence.